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T:- THE KOYIL OLUGU

(History of the Srirangam Temple)

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KOYIL OLUGU

THE KOYIL OLUGU

Srinivasa Tholappacharya,
Rajaguru Lakshmi Vilas
HOSPET.

THE KOYIL OLUGU

(HISTORY OF THE SRIRANGAM TEMPLE)

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CONDENSED ENGLISH VERSION
BY
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FOREWORD.

This book "Koyil Olugu" in English by Sri T. S. Parthasarathy, Public Relations Officer, Southern Railway, is a welcome publication. The original text is in the *Manipravala* style in Tamil freely mixed with Sanskrit words. Though the book is intended for the ordinary reader, yet it is really a *Multum in Parvo*, presenting a good summary of all that is known about the history of the Srirangam Temple in the original text. Now the same author is busy writing the "Tirumalai Olugu", portions of which have already appeared in the Tirumalai-Tirupati Devasthanams Monthly Bulletin. It is hoped that he will also write in the near future on the other important temple *Olugus* available.

In Sri Vaishnavite parlance "Koyil" always refers to the sacred temple of Lord Sri Ranganatha Perumal (Swami) at Srirangam. According to the Tamil lexicon publish under the authority of the University of Madras, 'Olugu' is defined as the "Register of a temple giving an account of its properties and its history." Hence the book "Koyil Olugu" is expected to give us the history of

the Srirangam Temple,—its growth and its acquisition of all kinds of wealth through the benefactions of its numerous devotees. In fact, a casual perusal of the original text shows that it is so.

It is said that when the East India Company took over the rule of this country from the Mohamedans in the beginning of the Nineteenth Century, one Joseph Wallace who was then in charge of the administration at Trichy, finding that the affairs of the Srirangam Temple were not in order, set them right as narrated in the "Koyil Olugu". Then several Olugus were in existence in many families at Srirangam. Wallace got them rewritten currently including contemporary events that took place during his time and deposit them in the temple with the seals of five leading Sthalathars. The author has closely followed one such manuscripi that was secured for him by the kind help of Sthanikam Parthasarathy Ayyangar, a leading Sri Vaishnavite scholar of Srirangam.

The original text seems to be as ort of compilation that has come down to posterity. It is not coherent and so it is very difficult to follow it. But the author has taken great pains to fully digest all facts contained in it

and then to present them in a neat chronological and narrative way. Whenever he noticed the tradition of the book diametrically opposed to the results of critical research, he has not failed to add the necessary foot-note or to give his reasons for his difference and these are very valuable.

In the original, under the Chapter "Udayavar Vaibhavam" about one third portion of the book is found to cover in very great detail the various administrative arrangements that were established in the Srirangam Temple by the Great Preceptor and Reformer and how they are now followed. These details, I am sure, will be of great interest to any reader who is desirous of knowing the "Olugu" of the temple. Ramanuja lived for sixty long years at Srirangam efficiently managing the affairs of the temple. The organisation introduced by him was so perfect that even to this day the the numerous departments of the temple function like clock-work and all Sri Vaishnavite temples are zealous to follow scrupulously the orders found in that temple. In this book the author has passingly touched the subject, giving broad outlines, in a couple of pages.

It is said by some Western scholars that our historic sense is very poor. But this book proves that it is not so. It contains a mine of information. The historians are only to co-ordinate the facts contained in it with those available from other sources.

V. M. NARASIMHAN,
B.A., B.E., A.M.I.E., M.R. SAN. I. (LN.),
Consulting Architect & Archaeologist,

MADRAS—5,
15—7—1954.

Preface

A series of ten articles on the "*Koyil Olugu*" originally contributed by me to the Tirumalai-Tirupati Devasthanams Monthly Bulletin, is now being placed before the public in the form of this book, after being completely revised and enlarged by me.

When I first completed reading the Tamil original ten years ago, I was considerably surprised at the very little use that had been made of the wealth of information it contained. Among the many valuable records left to posterity by the historically-minded members of the Sri Vaishnavite community, the *Koyil Olugu* stands supreme for its arrangement of facts and the abundance of historical details. It contains rare Tamil words, not found in other works, and these have now been included in the University Tamil lexicon. The book is, besides, a great source of inspiration to those who may peruse its pages as there is perhaps, no parallel in history to the devotion with which the Vaishnavites of Srirangam stood by the idol of Sri Ranganatha during periods of great travail and did all that lay in their power to protect it from desecration.

I am grateful to the Tirupati Devasthanam for giving a permanent shape to my humble effort by publishing my articles in the present form of a booklet. To Sri C. Anna Rao, Executive Officer of the Devasthanams and Sri T. R. Narasimhan, Manager of the Devasthanam Press goes the credit of producing this little volume in its attractive garb.

All the available printed editions of the *Koyil Olugu* are incomplete and come to an abrupt end while describing certain incidents that took place in the 16th century. This book would have also remained incomplete but for the timely assistance of Siromani Sthanikam S. Parthasarathi Iyengar, Editor, "Devasthana Patrika", Srirangam who very kindly lent me a complete manuscript of the *Olugu*. Sri Iyengar is a veritable repository of information regarding Srirangam and he furnished me with many interesting details about the great Uttamanambi family which I have incorporated in the work.

The excellent cover design is a labour of love by the Arts Advertising Designs, Madras.

T. S. PARTHASARATHY

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THE KOYIL OLUGU

INTRODUCTORY

"History is the one weak spot in Indian Literature. It is in fact, non-existent" observes Dr. A. A. Macdonell. This rule, though it applies generally to Indian Literature, is not without its exceptions. The Vaishnavites of South India always had a keen eye for history and subject to the limitations they were labouring under, have endeavoured their best to record historical details of the growth of their religion and biographical data of the Alvars and the Acaryas. The late Mr. T. A. Gopinatha Rao, one of the most brilliant research scholars of India, says "The members of this sect have left behind remarkable records embodying a fairly full and accurate history which is truly Boswellian in its tenderness and photographic in its fidelity and forms a refreshing contrast to the accounts left by the other sectarians. These records are abundant and the historian of the religions of India has only to co-ordinate the facts contained in them with those disclosed from

epigraphical and other sources." The different Guruparamparas, the Divya Suri Charitam, the Kaliyan Arulpadu and works like the Palanadai Vilakkam, the Idu and the Manipravala Vyakhyanas of commentators contain a vast treasure-house of biographical data regarding the Alvars and the later Acaryas. A unique work of this nature is, however, the *Koyil Oluğu* (கோயில் ஒழுகு) written by an unknown author or authors. The first part of this book, collated from various manuscripts available at the time, was first printed during the latter half of the last century and later by the Ananda Press, Madras in the year 1909. The second part does not appear to have been published at all and as far as I know, there has been no reprint of the first part either.

The book traces the history of the Sriraṅgam temple, known as "Periya Koyil" or "The Koyil" to Sri Vaishnavites, from the time of Vibhishana to the end of the 16th Century A.D. As Sriraṅgam was the capital of Sri Vaishnavism during the lifetime of several of the Alvars and Acaryas from Nathamuni downwards, the *Koyil Oluğu* contains a mine of information not found in biographical accounts including the Guru-

parampara Prabhava. A special feature of the book is that the unknown author has invariably furnished the dates of the various incidents detailed in the book in terms of the Kali Era at first and later the Salivahana Saka. Although the Kali Era years furnished by him appear to be wrong, the Saka years mentioned are more or less correct and supply us with a number of useful clues. The work also contains a number of intimate and touching anecdotes from the life of Ramanuja, not found in other biographies of the Acarya.

The language in which the *Koyil Olugu* has been written closely follows the Manipravala style used in the Guruparampara and the Idu, although in many places the Tamil used is somewhat modern. The contents of the work, with particular reference to dates and biographical details of the Alvars and Acaryas, are examined briefly in the following pages.

CHAPTER I

EARLY HISTORY OF THE SRIRANGA VIMANA

"மாட மாளிகை சூழ்திருவீதியுப்
மன்னுசோர் திருவிக்கிரமன் வீதியுப்
ஆடல் மாறனகளங்கன் வீதியு
மாலி நாடனமர்ந்துறை வீதியப்
கூடல் வாழ் குலசேகரன் வீதியுப்
குலவிராசபகேந்திரன் வீதியுப்
தேடரிய தர்மவர்மாவின் வீதியும்
தென்னரங்கர் திருவாவரணமே."

(The street full of storied structures, the street of the prosperous Trivikrama, the street of the Akalanka,* the street of Alinadan (Tirumangai Alvar), the street of Kulasekhara of Madura, the street of Rajamahendra of noble descent and the street of king Dharmavarma—these are the seven enclosures of the Lord of Srirangam).

At the commencement of the book, the origin of the Sri Ranga Vimana is traced. Brahma, the Creator, was the first to get it and was worshipping it in Satyaloka for a long time. The Vimana was later obtained by Ikshvaku and was being worshipped as

* Akalanka is an epithet attached to Vikrama Chola.

the family deity of that dynasty till the time of Sri Rama. After his conquest of Ravana, Sri Rama, out of great affection for Vibhishana, gave him the Vimana and while the latter was carrying it with him to Lanka, he placed it on the ground in between the two rivers at Srirangam and found to his utter grief that Lord Ranganatha had installed Himself at the spot which later came to be known as Bhuloka Vaikuntha.

The first devotee who had the privilege of constructing a regular temple around the Vimana was king Dharma Varma. This king is stated to have constructed a big temple at the spot with a Gopura, Pushkarini, Mantapas and other structures as laid down in the Agamas. It is difficult to place this king in history as the available details about him are scanty but he has been described in the book as one of the early Cholas. According to Vincent Smith, the mean date of the earliest known Chola King, Karikala, is A. D. 100.

There appears to have been a long interregnum after Dharma Varma's construction of the temple during which its history becomes totally obscure. The floods of the two rivers are stated to have covered the

entire temple with sand and the overgrowth around it hid it completely from outside view. It was at this stage that a descendant of Dharma Varma, called Kili Chola, came to the spot and while resting under a tree heard a parrot above repeat the following two slokas many times:

कावेरी विरजा सेयं वैकुण्ठं रङ्गमन्दिरम् ।
स वासुदेवो रङ्गेशः प्रत्यक्षं परमं पदम् ॥
विमानं प्रणवाकारं वेदशृङ्गं महाद्भुतम् ।
श्रीरङ्गशायी भगवान् प्रणवार्थप्रकाशकः ॥

Kaveri viraja seyam Vaikuntham Rangamandiram
Sa Vasudevo Rangesah pratyaksham paramam padam
Vimanam pranavakaram vedasrungam mahadbhutam
Sriranga sayee Bhagavan pranavartha prakasakah.

(The river Kaveri is verily the Viraja in Vaikuntha; the Srirangam Temple is Vaikuntha itself; Lord Ranga is none else but Vasudeva Himself and this is indeed God's eternal abode.

The Vimana is in the form of the Pranava (OM); its four towers are marvellously like the four vedas and God Rangasayi eternally expounds the meaning of the Pranava).

His curiosity was roused and he ordered that the place should be excavated. The

Vimana was found under the heap of sand and the Chola king, overjoyed at the discovery, entirely renovated the temple and restored it to its pristine glory. In the case of this king also, we are unable to decide his date as he is referred to only as Kili (Parrot) Chola, based probably on the above anecdote.

The next king who made a number of important additions to the temple was Raja Mahendra Chola, after whom one of the streets around the temple is still named. The information available about this king is also scanty.

The next anecdote in the book describes how Lord Ranganatha came to be known as Ramya Jamata (in Sanskrit) and Alagiya Manavala Perumal (in Tamil). A king of the Chola dynasty by name Nanda Chola, was reigning at Nichulapuri or Uraiyur near Trichinopoly and was childless for a long time. As a result of his devotion to Lord Ranganatha and through His grace, he found a female child in a lotus pond and brought her up under the name of Kamalavalli. When the girl came of age, she persisted in being wedded to Lord Ranganatha alone and Nanda Chola, knowing her heart, escorted

her with the paraphernalia of a bride to Sri Rangam where she found eternal union with her Lord. After thus offering his adopted daughter to the Lord, the Chola king decided to spend all his wealth in making additions to the temple and had many gopuras, mantapas and flower gardens constructed.

Kulasekhara Perumal, the next king to do kainkarya to the temple, is stated to have reigned over the Chera, Chola and Pandya kingdoms with capitals at Uraiyur, Madura and Kolli. His reign is stated to have taken place in the 50th year of the Kali Era ; but if this is taken as the Salivahana Saka, the period corresponds to the second century of the Christian Era. This Kulasekhara is stated to have married his daughter Chera Kulavalli, an amsa of Nila (one of the consorts of Vishnu), to Lord Ranganatha and donated his entire wealth to the temple. In a verse quoted in the book, he is referred to as 'Kudal Vazh' or a resident of Madura.

The book then takes us on to the fifth century A. D. during which a king of Bengal came to Srirangam with great wealth and offered it to Lord Ranganatha. It was, however, not accepted and the disappointed king left the riches outside the temple gate

and also a number of guards and Brahmins from his country. The Brahmins so left behind pleased Lord Ranganatha with their devotion and got the offering accepted at last. The gate at which this incident took place is still called 'Arya Bhatta gate'.

CHAPTER II.

THE SERVICES OF TIRUMANGAI ALVAR

After thus tracing the early history of the Srirangam Temple the *Koyil Olugu* next describes the life of Tirumangai Alvar after he settled down at Srirangam and his services to the shrine and the Tamil Prabandha. It is well-known that this Alvar is considered to be the last of the Alvars chronologically and if the years furnished in the book are taken as of the Salivahana Saka, his year of birth would appear to be 476 A. D. and the year in which he took up residence at Srirangam 523 A. D. Some works mention the Alvar as a contemporary of the Pallava ruler Narasimha Varman I of Kanchi (A. D. 625–645).* The book records that it was Tirumangai Alvar who pleaded with Lord Ranganatha and obtained, for the *Tiruvaymozhi* of Sri Sathakopa (Nammalvar), equal status with the Vedas. It was during the Kartigai festival one year that Tirumangai

* Pandit M. Raghava Aiyangar, writing in the "Krishnaswami Aiyangar Commemoration Volume" on the "Contemporaneity of Saints Tirumangai Alvar and Tiru Gnanasambandha" holds the view that the Alvar lived during the seventh century. T. A. Gopinatha Rao, however, fixes Tirumangai's age as the first half of the 9th century, arguing that the Alvar was a contemporary of Dantivarman, who, according to Jouveau Dubreuil, lived from A. D. 779 to A. D. 830.

sang divinely before the Lord his *Tirunedundandagam* and other prabandhas in the Deva Gana style of music and pleased Him so much that his request that Saint Sathakopa's *Tiruvaymozhi* should be recited along with the Vedas during the Adhyayanotsava in the month of Margazhi was granted immediately. The episode has been described in great detail in the *Kaliyan Arulpadu* of Periyavaccan Pillai, a full-length biography of Tirumangai Alvar. A very touching anecdote in this connection has been recorded in the *Koyil Olugu*. The Lord is stated to have been so pleased with the music of the Alvar that he ordered that the oil used for anointing Him, should be sent to the Alvar for being rubbed on his neck to relieve the strain. During the next Adhyayanotsava the *Tiruvaymozhi* of Saint Sathakopa was recited at the temple after the Veda Parayana and the name of '*Nammalvar*' was conferred by the Lord on the foremost of the Alvars, whose idol was also installed on the same seat with Him for the occasion.

Tirumangai then had extensive walls, gopuras etc., constructed around the temple and when once the consecrated flower garden

of Tondaradippodi Alvar came in the way, he ordered that the wall should be built around it and not across it. Both the Alvars were probably contemporaries although Tondaradippodi, whose year of birth is roughly 420 A. D., must have been far older than Tirumangai. The above episode is stated to have brought the two Alvars together and Tondaradippodi greatly appreciated the Kainkarya which the latter was doing for his Lord. The Dasavatara temple was also built by Tirumangai and one of the streets in Srirangam is still called 'Ali Nadan Veethi.'

A number of kings who had additional structures built around the temple are then mentioned and the most important of them was Sundara Pandya, who is stated to have spent an enormous sum of money for the purpose. He also endowed the temple with costly jewels studded with gems and pearls and vessels made of gold and silver. The monarch who must have been one of the Pandya kings of Madura, appears to have ruled over the Chera and Chola kingdoms also. Another famous king who had many improvements effected to the temple was Kulottunga Chola.

Although not in chronological sequence, the book describes at this stage the endowments made by King Vallabha Deva, disciple of Periyalvar. It records that when the Alvar was escorting Andal from Srivilliputtur to Srirangam with a view to enabling her to attain union with her Lord, Vallabha Deva sent his retinue along with them and after Andal attained eternal union with Lord Ranganatha, had a temple constructed for her at Srirangam. This Vallaba Deva was a Pandyan king ruling at Madura and had the famous Chelva Nambi as his minister. The story of how the king, at the instance of his minister, called for a conference of Pandits to decide 'Para Tattva' and how Periyalvar, solely by the grace of the Lord at Srivilliputtur, established that Narayana was the Supreme Lord, is known to every Vaishnavite. The period of the king as furnished in the *Koyil Olugu* corresponds to the second century A. D.*

The temple, after having thus passed through its palmy days from the time of Dharma Varma to the period of the Cholas,

* Here again, Raghava Aiyangar and Gopinatha Rao differ and respectively fix Periyalvar's age as the 8th and 9th century A. D.

had troublous days ahead. The Mahomedan king who was ruling at Delhi invaded the South and after vanquishing King Prataparudra, raided Hindu temples, desecrated them and took away with him a large number of idols to his capital. When the armies of the Sultan surrounded the temple and tried to enter it through the northern gate, one Panju Kondan gave them a brave battle, although he was soon outnumbered and overpowered. The marauders then entered the Sanctum Sanctorum and carried away the idols of Sri Alagiya Manavala and Chera Kula Valli. When they departed, a lady devotee of Sri Manavala, belonging to Karambanur, decided to accompany them under disguise with a view to ascertaining where the idols were being taken. She followed the Turushkas to Tirunarayanapuram (Melkote) where she witnessed their removing the idol of Sri Ramapriya from the shrine. On arrival at Delhi,* she found that the daughter of the Sultan was keeping the idol of Sri Alagiya Manavala in her

* There is obviously some confusion here in the *Koyil Olugu*. Another edition by Arangasami Mudaliar, printed at the Umapati Guruprakasa Press, Royapettah (1909) retains the Perumal at Candragiri till He is taken to Gingee by Goppanna Udaiyar, who finally establishes the God at Srirangam in 1371 A. D.

chamber and returning to Srirangam, she reported the matter to the temple authorities. Her services were greatly appreciated by the Lord and the title of 'Pin Thodarnda Valli' was conferred on her.

On hearing her report, the devotees at Srirangam decided to proceed to Delhi and recover the idols from the Sultan. Accordingly, sixty Vaishnavites proceeded to Delhi, guided by the lady devotee and on reaching there, succeeded in getting a promise from the Sultan that the idols would be returned. It was however no easy task for them to get the idol of Alagiya Manavala from the Sultani and finally they had to remove it from her chamber while she was asleep and journey throughout the night to cover a safe distance. The next morning the Sultani, unable to bear the pangs of separation from her Lord, started in pursuit after the Srirangam party. The Vaishnavites, who were about to be overtaken near the Tirumalai hills, decided to disperse and a family of three Kodavars was deputed to take the idol up the hills while the rest returned to Srirangam. The Mahomedan pursuers found, when they reached Srirangam, that the idol was not there and the

daughter of the Sultan breathed her last when she learnt that the image was irrecoverable.

The troops set out again in search of the idol and reached the vicinity of the Tirumalai hills. The three Kodavars who were hiding there with the idol found their position insecure and decided to climb down the valley with the Vigraha. The eldest of them offered to make the supreme sacrifice in the cause of the Lord and tying himself with the idol with creepers, rolled down the slope till he reached the bottom. When the other two reached the spot, they found the idol safe by the side of the mangled remains of the elder Kodavar. They cremated him according to rites and were guarding the idol when, by the passage of time, one of them died leaving the survivor to guard the idol on the northern slope of the hills. The Mahomedan troops returned to Delhi empty-handed.

After the Mahomedan invasion was over, the Chola king of the time ordered for a search to be made for the lost idols and the three missing Kodavars but there was no trace of them. The temple was reopened for worship with the available

Vigrahas. After nearly sixty years two hunters on the Tirumalai hills came across a strangelooking figure of eighty years of age worshipping a beautiful idol in the heart of the dense forest. The surviving Kodavar, fearing that his end might come soon, requested them to inform the Chandragiri king of the existence of the idol there and in due course, he and Alagiya Manavala were taken to Srirangam. By this time, the older generation had passed away and none was able to identify either the Kodavar or the image. A touching incident is narrated here in which a ninety year old, blind temple washerman is stated to have identified the vigraha by the smell of the water in which the idol's holy vestures were washed. The idol was then re-installed with all ceremony and the temple renovated by Rajendra Chola. The devoted washerman was given the title of 'Irankolli'.

CHAPTER III.

NATHAMUNI AND ALAVANDAR

We now get a few interesting details from the life of Sri Nathamuni, whom Yamunacharya reverently refers to as 'pitamaha' in his *Stotraratna*. So far as Srivaishnavism is concerned, Sri Nathamuni was a 'pitamaha' from more points of view than one. It was he who unearthed and collected the *pasurams* of all the Alvars and Andal, which had been practically forgotten and lost to the world at his time and set them to music, thereby rendering to the *Divya Prabandha** the service which Nambi Andar Nambi did for the *Tevaram* of the Saivite Saints. It was he who brought into force again the system of regular recitation of the sacred texts during festivals in the Srirangam temple as the procedure introduced by Tirumangai Alvar had by then fallen into desuetude. In addition, he was the founder of the school of philosophy, the doctrines of which were later developed

* A full-length article on this subject by the present writer, published under the caption "*The Music of the Divya Prabandha*" in Vol. II—No. 19 of T. T. Devasthanams Bulletin will be found in Appendix A.

by his grandson, Yamunacharya and were finally systematized and expounded by Ramanuja as the Visishtadvaita Siddhanta.

The *Koyil Olugu* records that, with the passage of time, the system introduced by Tirumangai Alvar, under which the idol of Sri Nammalvar was being brought to Srirangam every year for the Adhyayana Utsava and a recitation of the *Tiruvoymozhi* was being made along with Veda Parayana, came to be completely discontinued. It was at this stage that Sri Nathamuni was born at Mannargudi and it is noteworthy that his year of birth has been furnished as 823 A. D. which is a highly probable date. He was perhaps a descendant of the early Vaishnava immigrants from the banks of the Jumna who carried the Bhagavata or Pancharatra cult to the south and was an erudite scholar, devotee and mystic. During his pilgrimages, he once arrived at the holy town of Kumbakonam and there heard certain Brahmins from the west recite a decad of verses on the deity commencing with the word '*Aravamude*' and concluding with 'these ten out of a thousand composed by Sathakopa of Kuruhoor.' (Some accounts such as the Guruparampara have it that this incident took

place at Mannargudi itself). Nathamuni, who was thrilled by the verses, made anxious enquiries of them if they knew the rest of the verses and was sorely disappointed to learn that they knew only the ten they recited. He then proceeded to Alvar Tirunagari, the birthplace of Sri Nammalvar, and sought the advice of Parankusa Nambi who belonged to the school of Sri Madhurakavi Alvar. (Some works without any concern for chronology, state that Nathamuni contacted Madhurakavi himself or Parankusa Dasa, his disciple but the *Koyil Olugu* clearly mentions that this Parankusa Nambi belonged to the sishya parampara of Madhurakavi).* On his advice, Nathamuni repeated twelve thousand times the 'Kanni nun siruttambu' of Madhurakavi Alvar and contacting Nammalvar in 'yoga dasa', obtained from him the *Tiruvoymozhi*. He must have later collected from other sources the rest of the *pasurams* of the *Divya Prabandha*. Settling

* The late T. A. Gopinatha Rao, however, maintains, in his "Sri Subrahmanya Ayyar Lectures on the History of Sri Vaishnavas" that Nammalvar lived during the first half of the 9th century and wrote his memorable Tiruvoymozhi. In support of this, he quotes the Divyasuri carita of Garudavahana Pandita, the oldest extant work on the hierarchy of the Srivaishnavas, which distinctly states that Nathamuni obtained the Prabandha directly from Sathakopa, through the influence of Madhurakavi.

down at Srirangam, he traced the history of the recitation of the Prabandha in the temple and was greatly overjoyed to hear of the services rendered in that direction by the great Tirumangai Mannan. Nathamuni immediately addressed himself to a revival of the Prabandha recitation in the temple and he and his disciples devoted their entire attention to the propagation of the holy *pasurams*. Nathamuni emphasized that a recital of the Prabandha was as important to a Vaishnavite *mumukshu* as a study of the Veda, Vedanta, Itihasa and Purana was for a devout Brahmin. Following the example set by the illustrious Alvar who used to sing the verses in the Devagana style of music, Nathamuni decided to set the entire Prabandha to that style and completed the task with the assistance of his two nephews, Kizhai Ahattalvar and Melai Ahattalvar. After entrusting to them the responsibility of continuing his labour of love, the Acarya is stated to have returned to Mannargudi, his place of birth.

The two nephews of Sri Nathamuni were faithfully keeping up the tradition and in course of time the Lord was pleased to confer on them the titles of 'Manavalapperumal

Arayar' and 'Nada Vinoda Arayar'. The book explains that the Lord conferred these titles in His capacity as "Gayaka Sarvabhauma", a surprisingly modern expression.

Uyyakkondar (Pundarikaksha) and Manakkal Nambi (Rama Misra) who were the disciples of Nathamuni and next to him in spiritual succession, were then carrying on the tradition of their Acarya both as regards the Darsana (Religion) and the recital of the Prabandha. During their time a king from Orissa invaded the South and the devotees at Srirangam, who did not want the earlier incidents to be repeated, removed Alagiya Manavala Perumal to Tirumalirunjolai (Alagar Koyil) and kept the idol there for a year. In this interval, a number of enemies of the temple managed to make some unwanted changes in the mode of worship and brought a large number of non-Vaishnavites to settle down at Srirangam. It was at this time that Manakkal Nambi succeeded in converting Yamunacharya (Alavandar), who was leading a life of luxury, into the correct path and making him a devotee of Sri Ranganatha. Alavandar renounced all his riches, settled down at Srirangam and commenced propagating the Siddhanta by

writing his famous works like the *Agama Pramanya*. He also defeated in argument the protagonists of other religions and paved the way for the later Acaryas to establish Visishtadwaita on a secure footing.

Alvar Tiruvarangapperumal Arayar was the next Acarya who made valuable contributions to the musical setting of the Prabandha. (Some accounts mention him as the eldest of the four sons of Alavandar). He was a great musician himself and is stated to have enacted the lilas of Alagiya Manavala in the shape of dramas, probably of the Yaksha Gana type. The Lord conferred on him the title of 'Koyil Udaya Perumal Arayar.' The work records that the Arayar was an expert in singing the Prabandha with Abhinaya and it is well-known that later when he was deputed to proceed to Kanchipuram to bring Ramanuja to Srirangam, he pleased Lord Varadaraja with his music and obtained His divine permission to do so.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ADVENT OF RAMANUJA

No work that deals with the history of the Sriraṅgam temple can claim to do justice to the theme unless it describes in detail the invaluable services rendered by Sri Ramanuja who spent veritably a lifetime in putting the affairs of the temple in order. Ramanuja's name is inseparable from that of Sriraṅgam. As recorded by himself in his *Saranaṅgati Gadya*, he was blessed by Lord Raṅganatha Himself with the words "अत्रैव श्रीरङ्गे सुखमास्व." It is perhaps not so well-known that he was not only the *nirvahaka* of the new Darsana but also was for many, many years an active manaṅger of the Sriraṅgam temple. Most appropriately, therefore, nearly 70 paṅges of the *Koyil Oluṅgu*, formiṅg more than half its size, are devoted to a full-leṅgth description of the numerous improvements effected by Ramanuja in the daily conduct of the temple affairs and incidentally narrate a number of interestiṅg incidents in his life.

The work first traces in an admirable manner the early life of Ramanuja in a few

sentences. Towards the end of his life, Alavandar became anxious regarding a suitable successor for himself not only for managing the temple but also for propagating the Siddhanta, when he heard of the Visishtadvaitic leanings of Ramanuja who was then studying under the Advaitin, Yadavaprakasa. The venerable Acarya undertook a journey to Kanchipuram and personally satisfied himself about the suitability of Ramanuja to succeed him and, not wishing to disturb the young man's studies, returned to Srirangam after praying to Lord Varadaraja that Ramanuja should be spared to lead the new movement. When he later heard of the differences between Yadavaprakasa and Ramanuja in the interpretation of certain Upanishadic texts resulting in the termination of the latter's studies, he thought that it was the proper time for converting Ramanuja and commissioned his disciple Periya Nambi to proceed to Kanchipuram and achieve the task. According to the *Koyil Olugu*, Alavandar specially composed his *Stotraratna* for the occasion in praise of Lord Varadaraja and sent it through Nambi. When Periya Nambi recited this masterpiece of a Stotra at the shrine at Kanchi, Ramanuja was so

enchanted by its beauty that he immediately expressed a desire to accompany Nambi to Srirangam to pay his respects to its author. Unfortunately for Ramanuja, Alavandar had passed away just when he and Nambi reached the outskirts of Srirangam and he had to return to Kanchipuram after taking a vow that, with the grace of God, he would fulfil the three desires dearest to Alavandar's heart and which were not fulfilled in that Acarya's life-time. On the advice of Tirukkacci Nambi, one of the disciples of Alavandar, Ramanuja decided to have Periya Nambi as his Guru and again started for Srirangam. By a coincidence, he met the Nambi at Madurantakam and both returned to Kanchi where Ramanuja underwent the preliminary studies in Visishtadvaita under Nambi. After the return of Periya Nambi to Srirangam after a few months, Ramanuja entered the Sanyasa Asrama and the Vaishnavites of Srirangam decided to make him the head of their community and deputed Tiruvarangap-perumal Arayar to invite him to Srirangam. The Arayar proceeded to Kanchi and pleasing Lord Varadaraja with his music, got his permission to take Ramanuja with him. Ramanuja arrived at Srirangam on the Suddha

Paurnami day of the Vaikasi month, in the year Vikrama (Salivahana Saka) and was received with great eclat by the Vaishnavites. Led by Periya Nambi, Ramanuja had the *seva* of Sri Ranganatha for the first time and the Lord, whom the Acarya was to serve for many years to come, blessed him with the title of 'Udayavar' and ordered that he should be put up in the Cheran Mutt.

Ramanuja lost no time in taking over the management of the temple affairs and being himself in charge of the important items, appointed Kurattalvan to assist him in spreading the Siddhanta and Mudali Andan (Dasarathi) to assist him in carrying on the temple work. He however found that it was no easy task to clear the Augean stable as, due to the passage of time, the affairs of the temple had got into a most unsatisfactory state. Ramanuja's endeavours to introduce some sort of an order in the temple gave a rude jolt to many of the vested interests who had got entrenched there and he had to face severe opposition from them. The temple servants decided to get rid of him and attempted to poison him. Ramanuja was compelled to leave Srirangam and live at Tiruvellarai for a period of two years.

He installed Alagiya Manavala there, had a lake constructed and was carrying on his life's mission from there. After two years, the penitent Vaishnavite community invited him back to Srirangam and this time Ramanuja got a few capable disciples who were of great assistance to him in managing the temple affairs. He renovated the shrine of Dhanvantari and also restored the Pancharatra system of worship by replacing the Vaikhanasa temple priests. He also effected a large number of improvements in the daily routine of the temple, many of which are followed even to this day.

Ramanuja's fame and influence were gradually increasing and the only important person in Srirangam who did not care to join his camp was Periya Koyil Nambi, otherwise known as Sri Rangamrita Kavi. He was a very learned and influential man, the court Pandit of several crowned heads and had the sole monopoly for performing religious ceremonies and reading the Puranas at the temple. Ramanuja wanted to get rid of him and was waiting for an opportunity when Lord Ranganatha appeared in his dream and told him that the Nambi was a bhakta of His and should be shown every consideration.

Somewhat piqued at this, Ramanuja decided to go back to Kanchi when his disciple Kurattalvan assured him that Sri Rangamrita would soon be prevailed upon to become his camp follower. Only a scholar and poet of the stamp of Alvan could have achieved the task of converting an equally eminent and erudite person like Rangamrita, who, in due course, accepted Ramanuja's leadership and became his disciple. Ramanuja was highly pleased with this and in admiration of his new disciple's poetic gifts, named him '*Amudan*'. He was later known as Tiruvarangattu Amudanar. The faithful Alvan also managed in course of time to persuade Amudanar to part with his monopolies in the temple and this gave Ramanuja a free hand in introducing further reforms in the temple.

The *Koyil Olugu* here enumerates in great detail a series of reforms introduced by Ramanuja and a perusal of these in the original will be found interesting by both Vaishnavites and others. The thoroughness, efficiency and zeal with which Ramanuja carried out the reforms cannot but evoke the admiration of even modern administrators. He made the fullest use of his talented disciples whose number was now increasing

day by day. He had an occasion to review the recital of the Prabandha in the temple. One year, the idol of Sri Nammalvar could not be brought to Srirangam for the Adhyayana Utsava due to unexpected circumstances and Ramanuja had another idol made and installed in time for the occasion. The idols of the other Alvars and that of Nathamuni were also installed at the same time. Ramanuja completely revised the arrangements for the conduct of the Adhyayana Utsava and introduced an improved method for the recital of the Tamil Prabandha on the occasion.

CHAPTER V.

RAMANUJA'S SERVICES TO VISISHTADVAITA

Ramanuja was the very incarnation of compassion and he was far from being happy about Kurattalvan depriving Amudanar of his hereditary rights of Paurohitya and the reading of the Puranas in the temple. Although Alvan was carrying on both the services in a most efficient and selfless manner, Ramanuja felt that the many-sided talents of Amudanar were going to waste, and could be harnessed with advantage in the cause of Vaishnavism. He, therefore, decided that Amudanar should take a leading part in the recitation of the Prabandha in the temple and borrowing the manuscript of the Iyarpa from Tiruvarangapperumal Arayar, he deputed Amudanar to be in sole charge of its recitation. The latter readily agreed and in course of time composed, out of spontaneous reverence and admiration for Ramanuja, his famous centum '*Ramanuja Nootrandadi*' otherwise known as '*Prapanna Gayatri.*' Lord Ranganatha Himself was so pleased with Amudanar's composition that during

the procession in a Saptavarana festival, He ordered that all musical instruments should be stopped and commanded that the *Nootrandadi* snould be recited in public in the presence of Ramanuja and the entire Vaishnavite community. Ramanuja, after satisfying himself that it was not an exaggerated panegyric on himself, gave his consent for its inclusion as a part of the Iyarpa.

While he was thus managing efficiently the affairs of the temple on the one hand, Ramanuja was also making, on the other, rapid progress in his other mission in life, *viz.*, the systematization and consolidation of the Visishtadvaita philosophy. With infinite patience, he underwent a course of study under each of the five prominent disciples of Alavandar such as Tirukkoshtiyur Nambi and Tirumalai Andan. After thus equipping himself for the task fully he wrote, with the erudite and devoted Kurattalvan as his scribe, his commentaries on the *Brahma Sutras* and the *Gita*. He also wrote the *Vedartha Sangraha* and other works and decided that he should tour round India to obtain, for his works, the recognition they deserved from scholars of the other parts of the vast subcontinent. He selected Alvan as his compa-

nion and entrusted the management of the temple to Mudali Andan (Dasarathi). He invoked the Lord's blessings for his venture and received His benediction in full. Ramanuja then set out on his Digvijaya.

The *Koyil Olugu*, being a work dealing primarily with the history of the Srirangam temple, furnishes at this stage a very elaborate description of the system of worship evolved by Ramanuja and entrusted to Mudali Andan for execution. The organisation was so perfect that the various departments of the temple functioned like clockwork with an efficiency that cannot but evoke the admiration of modern administrators. A perusal, in the original, of the details of worship will be found highly interesting by students of Sri Vaishnavism and temple worship and a few of them are furnished below:

1. A sand glass* was kept at a particular place in the temple to indicate the time and the temple servants had instructions to ascertain the hour of the day from time to time to ensure that the various services were conducted punctually.

* This was probably a clepsydra, a clock worked by the flow of water. The place where it was kept is still known as the 'Nalikettan Vasal'.

2. A number of animals and birds such as elephants, horses, doves, deer, peacocks and parrots were being maintained in the temple and a special department looked after their maintenance.

3. There were separate departments for looking after repairs to the temple, for procuring the daily needs of flowers, vegetables, fruits and perfumes and for preserving the vestments, uniform, etc.

4. A gosala for the temple cows was opened at Cholanganallur and five villages were converted into pasture lands for them. Ramanuja used to visit the gosala frequently and stay there for several days and for his worship during such occasions, he had the idols of Krishna and Ranganatha installed there.

5. Among the scholars who recited the Vedas and the Prabandha during the temple service were luminaries like Garuda Vahana Pandita, Periya Nambi, Kurattalvan, Amudanar, Achan Pillai and Nadadur Ammal.

6. Among the texts recited were Sriranga Mahatmyam, the Sutras of Asvalayana, Apasthamba, and Bodhayana, Mimamsa and Vedanta Sutras, Vyakarana, the Stotra Ratna

of Alavandar and the Bhashyas and the Gadya Traya of Ramanuja.

7. Many of the systems introduced at the time were being continued intact for two hundred years after Mudali Andan.

Ramanuja successfully conducted his Digvijaya, visiting most of the religious centres in the west, north and east, engaging religious opponents in argument and converting large numbers of them into Sri Vaishnavites. Several crowned heads became his disciples and he established a number of mutts in North India. His interpretation of Upanishadic texts was so much appreciated in Kashmir that the title of '*Bhashyakara*' was conferred on him by the famous Sarada Pitham. During his visit to Tirumalirunjolai in the South, he fulfilled a desire which, according to tradition, Sri Andal cherished regarding Lord Azhagar and this secured for him the appellation of '*Koyil Annan*.' When he returned to Srirangam after his all-India tour, the entire Vaishnavite community gathered together and received him with great ovation. Lord Ranganatha indicated His divine approval and appreciation of the services rendered by Ramanuja in the cause

of Vaishnavism and commanded that he should thenceforth reside only at Srirangam. The *Koyil Olugu* records that Ramanuja had a copy of the *Sri Bhashya* prepared by Alvan and sent it to the Sarada Pitham at Kashmir through Nadadur Ammal.

We now have an account of how Ramanuja fulfilled the last of the three desires of Alavandar which he undertook to fulfil. His disciple Alvan, who was once living in princely luxury, had renounced everything after joining his master and was living by *unchavritti*. Due to heavy rain on a particular day Alvan could not go for his daily rounds and had retired for the night without food. The night *aradhana* was going on in the temple and his wife Andal thought in her mind that it was very unkind on the part of the Lord to allow a devotee like her husband to starve for want of food. Immediately, a Vaishnavite turned up at their house with '*prasadam*' from the temple and Alvan, regretting the unbecoming thoughts of his wife took a little portion and shared it with her. By divine will, two sons were born to Andal soon after and Ramanuja, overjoyed to hear the news, visited Alvan's residence with Embar on the twelfth day and

named one of the two boys as Parasara. The other child was named Sri Rama Pillai, after the father of Alvan. It is well-known that as a result of this personal '*kataksha*' of Ramanuja, Parasara Bhatta became a boy prodigy and a precocious genius and although not blessed with long life, succeeded Ramanuja as the head of the Vaishnavite community and occupied that position with considerable distinction.

Ramanuja lived in this manner for 60 years at Srirangam, which had by now become a veritable Rome for Sri Vaishnavism. The community consisted of seven hundred *jiyars*, twelve thousand *ekangis*, seventyfour *acarya purushas* (*simhasanadhipatis*) and innumerable ordinary Vaishnavites, all drawing their inspiration from Ramanuja and looking to him for guidance for their conduct, temporal and spiritual.

CHAPTER VI.

LATER LIFE OF RAMANUJA

Troublous days were in store for Ramanuja. The Chola king at the time, who professed the Saiva faith, turned a bigot and started persecuting the Vaishnavites in many ways, even going to the extent of demolishing their temples. His son pointed out to him that it was futile attempting to destroy Vaishnavism by demolishing temple walls as the faith was broadbased on two indestructible walls *viz.* the Tiruvaymozhi and the Ramayana but his advice was not heeded by the king. (According to Vincent Smith, the Chola king who was hostile to Ramanuja was Adhirajendra. The celebrated historian has it that Adhirajendra was assassinated in A. D. 1074 and was succeeded by Rajendra Kulottunga I, who was not his son). The Chola king was ill-advised by his minister, who was, strangely enough, a Vaishnavite himself, that Ramanuja should be made to accept the superiority of the Saivite religion and sent a party of soldiers to bring the sage before him. When this news reached Rama-

nuja, he requested Periya Nambi to protect the temple from any possible danger and at the pressure of his disciples, agreed to Kurattalvan impersonating him and proceeding to Gangai Konda Cholapuram in the garb of a sanyasin. Periya Nambi also followed Alvan to the capital of the bigoted Chola.

Ramanuja was prevailed upon to put on white robes and escape in the direction of Mysore. He prayed to Lord Ranganatha that He should protect Himself with His own "sakti" (a sentiment faithfully echoed by Vedanta Desika in his "Abhitistava") and proceeded westwards along with Mudali Andan and others. The king's troops pursued the party unsuccessfully for some distance but Ramanuja and his followers managed to reach the Mysore border safely. The territory was then being ruled by the Hoysala king Bittideva or Bittiga who was a zealous Jain by religion. Ramanuja, with the assistance of Mudali Andan, converted a large number of Jains into Vaishnavites and in the end, succeeded in converting the king himself, whom he named as Vishnuvardhana. With royal support, he renovated the Yadavadri temples and renamed the place as

"Tirunarayanapuram." Learning that the idol of Ramapriya had been carried away to Delhi during an earlier Mahomedan invasion, the saint proceeded thither, brought the idol back to Yadavadri and installed it in its original place. He then improved the system of worship at the temple and brought it on a par with Srirangam.

Kurattalvan and Periya Nambi, who were produced before the Chola king, tried their best to convince him that they had no enmity with any other religion and that their faith was as authoritative as Saivism; but the intransigent Chola forced Alvan to write the words "शिवात्परतरं नास्ति." Alvan took the threat very lightly and after writing the words, as desired by the king, added "द्रोणमस्ति ततः परं" above them, treating the words Siva and Drona as measures. The incensed Chola ordered that the eyes of both the Vaishnavites should be gouged. The cruel punishment was first inflicted on the venerable Periya Nambi who, unable to bear the ordeal, passed away soon after. Alvan blinded his own eyes by applying a kind of camphor to them and with the help of a Srivaishnavite from Madurantakam, cremated

Nambi according to the sastras and returned to Srirangam. There, to his utter horror, he found the temple closed to the followers of Ramanuja and unable to stay in that atmosphere even for a minute, he repaired to Tirumalirunjolai with his wife and infant sons and took up his abode there.

The *Koyil Olugu* states that when the sad fate that befell his guru Periya Nambi and his affectionate disciple Alvan was conveyed to Ramanuja, his mental anguish was so great that despite his saintly nature, he uttered a curse on the heartless Chola king. Soon after, the king developed a carbuncle on his neck and died a painful death. His successor Kulottunga, deeply repenting the unjust deeds of Adhirajendra, visited the Srirangam temple and deciding to restore it back to Ramanuja, sent one Maruti Andan to Mysore to invite the Acarya to return to Srirangam. Ramanuja took leave of his important disciples at Tirunarayanapuram, whose number had gone up to fifty-two, visited Tirumalai on his way and installed Lord Govindaraja at the foot of the hill. He then proceeded straight to Tirumalirunjolai to console Alvan and take him also to Srirangam. On Ramanuja's return to

Srirangam, Kulottunga Chola personally proceeded there and under instructions from the former, handed over the temple to Mudali Andan with due ceremony. Ramanuja had this incident engraved at the Arya Bhatta Gate in the shape of an inscription. All his disciples who had to leave Srirangam by force of circumstances, rejoined him and resumed their usual service in the temple.

According to the *Koyil Olugu*, Ramanuja was now well nigh over a hundred years of age and felt that his life's mission was fast coming to an end. He posed for a sculptor called Ramanujadasa and, embracing the idol once, had it installed at his birth-place Sriperumbudur by Kandadai Andan. He then appointed Parasara Bhatta as his apostolic successor (Kurattalvan having predeceased him) and shed his mortal coil, full of years and glory, after having actively served humanity in general and Srivaishnavism in particular for nearly a century.

An interesting description of the origin of the seven names of Ramanuja is found in the work at the end of the saint's life.

1. *Ilayazhvar*—the name given by his uncle Tirumalai Nambi on the twelfth day after his birth.

2. *Ramanuja*—the name conferred by Lord Varadaraja after he became a Sanyasin.

3. *Udayavar*—the name given by Lord Ranganatha when Ramanuja took up his residence at Srirangam.

4. *Koyil Annan*—a title which he obtained at Tirumalirunjolai for fulfilling a desire of Sri Andal regarding Lord Azhagar.

5. *Emberumanar*—the name conferred by Tirukkoshtiyur Nambi when he found that Ramanuja was the very embodiment of compassion.

6. *Bhashyakara*—the appellation conferred by the Sarada Pitham at Kashmir for his Commentary on the Brahma Sutras.

7. *Yatiraja*—the title earned by himself by his unparalleled austerity as a Sanyasin for over ninety years.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SUCCESSORS OF RAMANUJA

Thus ended the glorious life of Ramanuja and in accordance with his parting command, Parasara Bhatta, son of Kurattalvan, succeeded him as the head of the Vaishnavite community. As already mentioned, this Acarya was one of the brightest stars in the firmament of Sri Vaishnavism and from a boy prodigy, had developed into a precocious genius. The first task he had to fulfil after succeeding Ramanuja was to defeat in argument the famous Vedantin from Western India (probably Mysore) whom Ramanuja himself was anxious to bring into the Vaishnavite fold. With the blessings of the Lord, Bhatta proceeded to the town which was the Vedantin's stronghold and vanquished him with effortless ease. The Vedantin renounced the world, became his disciple and following Bhatta to Srirangam, joined the Vaishnavite fold under the title of Nanjiyar. The *Koyil Olugu* mentions here that during this period the temple wall adjoining the Trivikraman

Veethi, which was in bad repairs, collapsed and was rebuilt by Vira Sundara Brahma Raya.*

Bhatta composed his famous poems and wrote his commentaries on the Vishnu Sahasranama and the Kaisiki Purana. The latter work was publicly accepted by the Lord on a Kaisiki Dvadasi day in the month of Kartikai and Bhatta himself was called to heaven soon after the dedication of his work. After his passing away, his brother Veda Vyasa Bhatta, also known as Sri Ramappillai, was managing the Paurohitya and the reading of the Puranas in the temple.

Nanjiyar was the next apostolic successor to Bhatta. During his time, one of the priests in the temple was afflicted with an incurable disease and became unfit for service within the holy precincts. Andal, the mother of Parasara Bhatta, took pity on the suffering priest and requested Kura Narayana Jeeyar to cure him with the aid of his unique powers. This old and venerable Jeeyar was the disciple of Kurattalvan

* The Guruparampara provides further information regarding this incident. While building the wall, Vira Sundara, not following the example of Tirumangai Alvar, pulled down the house of Pillai Pillai Alvan. He also gave trouble to Bhatta, who, as a result, had to reside at Tirukkoshtiyur for some time.

when the latter was residing at Tirumalirunjolai and was an expert in Mantra Sastra. He would not, however, make use of his powers except in the service of the Lord and at the bidding of Andal, he composed a centum of verses called the 'Sudarsana Satakam' and by its incantation, restored the ailing priest to health. (This stotra is a grand piece of literary effort with a magnificent sound effect and it is noteworthy that even the great Vedanta Desika was influenced by it when he composed his 'Garuda Panchasat').

A very moving anecdote is narrated here which proves that the Lord is ever anxious to grant redemption to His devotees who enter the path of evil and take them back into the fold. By a cruel stroke of fate, one of the Arayars in the temple was attracted to things sensual and in spite of the best endeavours of the community to prevent him from disgracing himself, went and lived in a cheri with an untouchable woman. Once when the Lord was resting in a mantapam near the cheri on His way to Kizhaiyur for a festival, the Arayar, who was ashamed to come out of his habitation, could not resist an urge to sing His praise

and burst forth into song from the cheri. The Lord, out of compassion for the erring temple minstrel, commanded that he should be brought to His presence and despite unanimous protests from the Vaishnavite community, reformed him and got him restored to his former place. The Arayar was thenceforth known as 'Varam Tarum Perumal Arayar'.*

Kura Narayana Jeeyar, the Mantrika, rendered many valuable services to the temple during this period. Prompted by a king then ruling at Srirangapatnam in Mysore, a sanyasi, who was an adept in black magic, made himself invisible through his art and entering the Srirangam temple with a view to removing the mula vigraha to Srirangapatnam, attempted to lift the idol from its pedestal by magical incantation. The public, in great consternation, sought the help of the Jeeyar who, by a clever trick,

* Dr. V. Raghavan, Head of the Department of Sanskrit, Madras University has composed a Sanskrit poem called "देवन्दी वरदराजः" based on this anecdote as narrated to him by the late Srirangacharya, well-known Harikatha performer of Chidambaram. The temple minstrel's name, according to Dr. Raghavan, was Varadaraja. Dr. Raghavan says that the spell of the appeal which the Bhagavatar's narration produced, never left him even after he had finished composing his poem on the salvation of the fallen Brahmin minstrel.

made the sanyasi visible but finding that he had supernatural powers, compromised with him by the offer of costly clothes and ornaments and got the idol installed in its original position. The Jeeyar, however, by another clever ruse got the sanyasi slain while he was on his way to Srirangapatnam and had the valuables restored to the temple. On another occasion, when there was considerable opposition from the Saivites of Kizhaiyur (Jambukesvaram), the Jeeyar vanquished them with the help of the Nrisimha Yantra. Once during the Boating Festival, the decorated Boat on which the idol was being taken was about to be carried down the current of the Kaveri when the Jeeyar again averted the accident by his extraordinary powers. He also carried out a number of improvements to the bank of the Kaveri to prevent the annual flooding of the temple when the river was in spate.

These services of the Jeeyar were greatly appreciated by the servants of the temple and others and they wanted to put him in charge of the entire temple management. Kandadai Tolappar, who was the hereditary trustee of the temple, did not agree to this. The temple servants, however,

managed to get the Jeeyar appointed in the temple by influencing the sons of Tolappar, who were simple-hearted men. Later, due to a misunderstanding with the king, Tolappar and his sons were forced to leave Srirangam and proceed to Kanchipuram and Tirumazhisai respectively and Kura Narayana Jeeyar got himself well established in the temple under the title 'Sri Ranga Narayana Jeeyar'. This event marked the gradual elimination of the Kandadai family from the management of the temple affairs and the receiving of temple honours.

The *Koyil Olugu* now takes us to the 14th century A. D. and furnishes two very reliable dates. The first of these is 1327 A.D. which year it mentions as the one in which the Muhammadan invasion of the South took place. According to Vincent Smith, it was in this year that Dhora Samudra, the capital of the Hoysala kings of the Mysore country, was sacked by the Muslim invaders. The next date mentioned in the work is 1371 A. D., by which year Srirangam was completely cleared of its Muslim occupants and the idols were re-installed in their original shrines. In the North, the foundation of the Vijayanagar empire had been

laid by Vidyaranya with Anegundi as the nucleus. Harihara II, who was the first independent sovereign of Vijayanagar, ascended the throne in 1379 and his dominion included Trichinopoly and Kanchipuram. In the Srirangam temple, one Sri Rangarayar was in charge as the fifth successor of Sri Ranga Narayana Jeeyar. Before describing the conditions then obtaining, we shall see how the Srirangam temple fared during Malik Kafur's invasion, as narrated in the *Koyil Olugu*.

CHAPTER VIII.

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THE SACK OF SRIRANGAM

It was after the year A. D. 1327 that news reached Sriraṅgam that Muslim invaders under the leadership of Malik Kafur had advanced as far as Tondaimandalam (the districts near Madras). The local devotees cast lots to decide whether the idols should be kept at Sriraṅgam or removed to safer places in the interior. The decision, unfortunately, was in favour of retaining the idols at Sriraṅgam and even the annual festival was commenced and was being conducted in full swing. By this time, the Muslim hordes had passed Samayapuram and the Vaishnavites, realising their mistake too late, decided to adopt the best possible course under the circumstances. Under the leadership of Sri Raṅgaraya, they despatched southwards the idol of Alaǧiya Manavala, accompanied by Pillai Lokacharya and a few selected others and camouflaged the important shrines in the temple by closing their entrances with brick walls. Several idols were hidden inside the huge pillars of the temple. When the Muhammadan

invaders entered the temple soon after, they found all the important idols missing, and enraged at this, they ordered a general massacre of all Vaishnavite devotees. One account has it that no less than 12,000 Vaishnavites, including Sudarsana Bhatta, the author of *Sruta Prakasika*, were put to the sword by the heartless marauders.* When they were about to destroy the temple building, a devout Vaishnavite lady, pretending to be intimate with their chieftain, diverted his iconoclastic zeal elsewhere and thereby saved the main temple. Another Vaishnavite called Singappiran, also managed to get into the commander's confidence and successfully dissuaded him from causing any major damage to the temple.

The party of devotees who proceeded southwards with the idol had a chequered career. They were first set upon by highwaymen and were relieved of all their valuables. They however managed to reach Jyotishkudi safely with the idols and here, after a month's stay, the venerable Pillai Lokacharya passed away. The idol was then worshipped at Tirumalirunjolai for a

* The incident is referred to in Tamil as "பன்னீராயிரம் திருமுடி திருத்திய கலாபம்."

year and was later taken to Kozhikode, to which refuge many idols from important shrines including that of Nammalvar, had been removed during that troublous period. After a year's stay at Kozhikode, the idols of Alagiya Manavala and Nammalvar were taken by the sea route to the Mysore coast and from there the latter idol alone was conveyed to Tirunarayanapuram and finally to Tirupati. The idol must have been kept and worshipped on the Tirumalai Hill for over 40 years for, Malik Kafur's invasion of the South took place roughly about 1327 A. D. and it was not until 1371 A. D. that Srirangam was completely freed from the Muslim occupation forces stationed there. By the latter year, Harihara and Bukka were firmly established at Anegundi and one of their vassals by name Goppanarya was ruling from the Gingee Fort. Goppana, who was a Brahmin, once went to Tirumalai to worship Lord Venkatesa and there saw the idols from Srirangam. After fully acquainting himself with the developments at Srirangam, he first removed the idols to Gingee, his headquarters, and then planned an attack on the Muslim forces at Srirangam. Ably assisted by the local Vaishnavites who

provided the necessary espionage, Goppana recaptured Srirangam without much fighting and in the month of Vaikasi of the year Paritapi (1371 A. D.) had the various idols re-installed in their original shrines. The Tirupati Devasthanam Epigraphical Report narrates the incident as follows :

In an article by Dr. E. Hultzsch on the "Ranganatha inscription of Saka 1293" published in Vol VI. of Epigraphia Indica, Goppana is reported to have taken the image of Alagiya-Manavala-Perumal back from Tirumala (Tirupati), where it was removed from Srirangam, when Trichinopoly was captured by the Muhammadans, and where it was safely preserved and "worshipped for a long time" until it was transferred to Senji (Gingee) in the South Arcot District, and thence to Srirangam and there re-consecrated and re-installed in Saka 1293 by Goppana. Goppana is stated to have gone on a pilgrimage to Tirumala while he held charge of the Senji Province under Kampana II and there found "an additional bronze image" worshipped along with the image of Sri Venkateswara. He enquired of the priests as to the cause of its existence and was informed that it was an image of Sri Ranga-

natha brought over from Srirangam for safe preservation during the Muhammadan invasion of the place. Being a devout adorer of Vishnu, he eagerly desired to restore the image to its original place: but seeing that Srirangam was still in the hands of its Muhammadan conquerors, he proposed to take the image first to Senji, his capital town, and worship it there under his personal protection, until such time as when he could safely restore it to its own shrine in Srirangam on the expulsion of the aliens from the place. With the consent of the priests of the Tirumala temple, who looked after its worship so long, he transferred the image to Senji and, placing it in the Ranganatha shrine on the hill at Singavaram, a suburb of Senji, he had it duly adored until Saka 1293, when he finally carried it to Srirangam and reconsecrated it (Vide the late Mr. T. A. Gopinatha Rao's Introduction to "Madhura Vijayam" or "Vira Kamparaya Caritam" by Gangadevi, page 25).

It took 10 years for Kampana to defeat and drive the Mussalmans from Srirangam and the country round about Madura, after his conquest of Sambuvaraya and the occupation of Kanchi in Saka 1283. And

therefore the re-setting up of the image in Srirangam by Goppana was only possible in Saka 1293 and until that date it must have been preserved at Senji for about two or three years after its removal from Tirumala. The Kilaka year corresponding to Saka 1290 being very near in time to the date of re-installation at Srirangam in Saka 1293, it is almost certain that the Pregada's (Goppana's) presence at Tirumala was owing to this mission of transference of the image from Tirumala and that the Pregada was none other than Goppana, the Brahmana general of Kampana II and the Governor of Senji. It is a fanciful way of stating that Goppana first learnt of the preservation and worship at Tirumala of the bronze image of Alagiya-Manavala-Perumal of Srirangam only on the occasion of his pilgrimage to Tirumala, while as a matter of fact, he, as a ruler, would have known it long before and predetermined its restoration in time. His pilgrimage itself would therefore have been primarily planned and undertaken with this avowed object of its transference from Tirumala to Senji. The tradition current in Tirupati respecting this Srirangam image agrees substantially with that noticed in article No. 33 of Ep. Ind.,

Vol VI, but adds a little touching detail regarding its preservation by a father and a son for nearly six months in a deep and narrow gorge near Chandragiri from its threatened desecration by the Muhammadans during its transference from Tirumala. The above record indicates the extent of sway that Kampana II held over the Dakkan from Tirumala or Venkatadri southwards."

Goppana had the happy incident inscribed on Dharma Varma's wall in the shape of two Sanskrit verses which are seen even today in front of Sri Vishvaksena's shrine. The Slokas read as follows:—

स्वस्ति श्रीः बन्धुप्रिये शकाब्दे (शकाब्द १२९३)

1. आनीयानीलशृङ्गद्युतिरचितजगद्रञ्जनादञ्जनाद्रेः
चेञ्चद्यामाराध्य कञ्चित्समयमथ निहत्योद्धनुष्कान् तुलुष्कान् ।
लक्ष्मीक्ष्माभ्यामुभाभ्यां सह निजनगरे स्थापयन् रङ्गनाथं
सम्यग्वर्यां सपर्यां पुनरकृत यशोदर्पणो गोप्पणार्यः ॥

2. विश्वेशं रङ्गराजं वृषभगिरितटात् गोप्पणक्षोणिदेवो
नीत्वा स्वां राजधानीं निजबलनिहतोत्सिक्ततौलुप्कसैन्यः ।
कृत्वा श्रारङ्गभूमिं कृतयुगसहितां तं च लक्ष्मीमहीभ्यां
संस्थाप्यास्यां सरोजोद्भव इव कुरुते साधुचर्यासपर्याम् ॥

(After bringing Sri Ranganatha from Anjanadri (Tirumalai), which delights the world with its peaks covered with dark clouds, and worshipping Him for some time at Chenchi with Sri Devi and Bhu Devi, Goppanarya, who is like a mirror of fame, vanquished the Muhammadans, who were expert archers, and re-installing the Lord at His own city of Srirangam, restored the traditional system of worship in the temple.

Goppanarya, the Brahmin, brought Sri Rangaraja, the Lord of the Universe, from the slope of the Vrishabhagiri (Tirumalai) to his capital and after destroying the Muslim army with his forces, reinstalled Him with Sri and Bhumi at Srirangam and thus introduced the Krita Yuga there again. In this deed, which is praised by all righteous men, he acted like the very Brahma, (the Lotus-Born).*

* Several writers have traced the authorship of these two slokas to Sri Vedanta Desika who escaped from the Srirangam massacre with the two sons of Sudarsana Bhatta, after preserving the manuscript of "Sruta Prakasika" under the temple wall. But the generally quoted date of Desika's death, which is 1369, comes in the way of this theory being accepted. According to the chronogram "Bandhupriya" the date of the inscription appears to be 1371 A. D. Gopinatha Rao quotes from the "Vedanta Desika Vaibhavaprakasika" of Doddacharya to prove that Desika was still alive when Goppana re-installed the idols at Srirangam.

After this incident, several of the leading Vaishnavite acaryas at Srirangam like Uttama Nambi appear to have had close contacts with the kings of Vijayanagar such as Harihara Raya and his son Viruppanna Udayar. These princes are stated to have weighed themselves in gold and offered it to Sri Ranganatha and this gold was utilised for making vessels for the temple and for inlaying its roof. It is well-known that the kings of the Saluva dynasty were staunch Vaishnavites and they appear to have helped considerably the Vaishnavites of Srirangam in overcoming the opposition of the Saivites of Tiruvanaikkaval. Among the kings, vassals and commanders of the Vijayanagar empire mentioned in the *Koyil Olugu* in this context are Harihara Raya, Maha Raya, Goppanna Udayar, Virupanna Udayar, Muthaya Dennayaka, Thammanna Udayar. Pradhani Somappa, Kadava Annar and Goppannar. One Timma Raut represen-

"जित्वा तुलाक्कान् भुवि गोपणेन्द्रो रङ्गाधिपं स्थापितवान् स्वदेशे ।
इत्येवमाकर्ण्य गुरु कवीन्द्रो हृष्टोभवद्यस्तमहं प्रपद्ये ॥"

Goppanarya's inscription has been edited in a masterly way by Dr. E. Hultzsch in Vol VI of Epigraphia Indica and the learned Doctor concludes that the slokas were written by Vedanta Desika, stating that the chronogram बन्धुप्रिय must be a mistake and should read as बहुप्रिय.

tative of Saluva Gopala Raja, is mentioned as having spent lavishly for beautifying the temple. Harihara Raya is stated to have consecrated to the deity a very costly cot made entirely of ivory.

The interest taken by the chiefs of Vijayanagar in the temple affairs of Srirangam, however, appears to have resulted in a scramble for royal favours among the local acaryas connected with the temple and the work records that after 1418 A.D., an agreement was arrived at between Uttama Nambi and Vedacharya Bhatta, the rivals. A sloka quoted in this context reads as follows:—

श्रीमच्छकाब्दे नवलोकभाजि विकारिणि ह्युत्तमनम्बिनाम्नः ।
वेदार्यभट्टोपरि तिम्मराजो वितीर्य पत्रं समयं तदाग्रहीत् ॥

[In Saka 1340, Vikarini, Vedarya Bhatta gave to Uttamanambi, in the presence of Timmaraja, a document and thus obtained time (a further lease of office)]

The king ruling at Vijayanagar after the year 1421 A.D., is mentioned in the work as Pratapa Deva Raya and this ruler is evidently Deva Raya II, otherwise known as Immadi, Pratapa or Praudha. In 1441 A.D. Viruppanna Udayar, probably a vassal of

Deva Raya, built a shrine for Sudarsana and also installed Yantra Narasimha at Sriranġam.

We now ġet a few details from the life of the last of the ġreat Acaryas, Manavala Mahamuni, who is referred to in the *Koyil Oluġu* as Periya Jeeyar. The year in which this Acarya entered the sanyasa asrama and took up residence at the Pallavarayan Muti in the Trivikraman Tiruveethi at Sriranġam is shown as (Parthiva) 1465 A D. The new Jeeyar did not easily secure the alleġiance of the leadinġ Vaishnavites of the place and Uttama Nambi, son of Periya Uttama Nambi referred to supra, was one amonġ the hostile party. Prativadi Bhayamkaram Annan, a leadinġ disciple of Manavala Mahamuni, however, succeeded in convertinġ the Nambi as a disciple of his Acarya, whose influence was now steadily on the increase. The book records that the Jeeyar was commanded by the Lord to do Kalakshepam in the temple for a period of one year at the end of which he was blessed with the sloka "श्रीशैलेश दयापात्रं", From that date, this sloka continues to be the 'Thanian' of the Tenġalai community of Sri Vaishnavites who are followers of Sri Manavala Mahamuni.

CHAPTER IX.

THE GREAT UTTAMANAMBI FAMILY

It is necessary, at this stage, to deal at some length with the genealogical account of the great Uttama Nambi family, hereditary wardens and devoted custodians of the Srirangam temple for over ninety generations. The family appears to have been so closely connected with Sri Ranganatha that they treated His temple almost like a family concern, passed through its many vicissitudes of fortune and adversity and stood or fell together with that institution. Members of this ancient and distinguished family are still residing at Srirangam and although they no longer enjoy the privileges of their palmy days, they still possess a few enviable rights, especially during the Kartikai festival.

Although details and anecdotes about the family are found scattered in a number of works like the Garu Parampara Prabhavam, Divya Suri Charitam, the Trichinopoly District Gazetteer and the Uttamanambi Vamsa Prabhavam, and a full list of the family is furnished in the Mackenzie MSS preserved in the Madras Oriental Library'

the *Koyil Olugu* is one of the main sources of information regarding the great services rendered by generations of this family to the Srirangam temple. (The Mackenzie manuscript gives a complete list of Uttama Nambis from Periyalvar downwards with their ages in terms of years, months and days). The family traces its origin from the grandson of Periyalvar, called Pillai Iyan Uttama Nambi His father Sri Ramandar (son of Periyalvar) migrated from Srivilliputtur to Srirangam when the Alvar escorted his foster daughter Andal with the paraphernalia of a bride to be united with her divine consort, Lord Ranganatha. Commencing from Pillai Iyan Uttama Nambi, seventy-three generations of the family managed the affairs of the temple, making various endowments and consecrating costly ornaments to the idol. The seventy-fourth descendant of the family is stated to be Garuda Vahana Pandita, otherwise known as Srinivasa Uttamanambi, Srinivasa Mahakavi and Kavi Vaidya Purandara. He was a contemporary of Ramanuja and was his close associate and lieutenant from the time that Acarya took up residence at Srirangam. The *Koyil Olugu* records that one day when Mudali Andan committed an act of indis-

creation by offering to the Lord rose apple fruits (Jambu phala), Ramanuja had suitable medicines prepared by Garuda Vahana Pandita and offered them as an antidote. He also had the idol of Dhanvantari installed in the temple with the help of the Pandita. The poet-physician is also stated to have composed the "Divya Suri Charitam" in Sanskrit, a Mahakavya of eighteen chapters dealing with the lives of the ten Alvars, Andal and Madhurakavi.

The seventy-fifth Uttamanambi was Sri Rangacarya who witnessed the passing away of Ramanuja and took a leading part in the conduct of his obsequies. The next prominent scion of the family was Krishnaraya, the 79th descendant, who in 1371 A. D. contacted Goppanarya at Gingee and had Srirangam freed from the hands of Mahomedans. He visited Vijayanagar a number of times and obtained from Bukka I and his son Harihara grants amounting to 17,000 gold mohurs with which money he bought 106 villages for the temple. In 1375, when there was a strong dispute between the Vaishnavites of Srirangam and the Saivites of Tiruvanaikkaval regarding the boundary between the two sacred towns, the king of Vijaya-

nagar sent his Guru Vyasa Raya to arbitrate and it was finally left to Krishnaraya Uttamanambi to demarcate the boundary by running between the two villages blindfolded, chanting the Ashtakshara.*

Krishnaraya's son Srirangacarya was an equally distinguished servant of the Lord and secured 101 more villages as endowments for the temple. It was during his time that Manavala Mahamuni came to reside at Srirangam and the story of how he first treated the Periya Jiyar with scant respect and was later converted as his disciple by Prativadi Bhayamkaram Annan has been narrated before. As a token of gratitude, Srirangacarya relinquished a number of his rights in the temple in favour of Annan. He also had a wall built between Srirangam and Tiruvanaikkaval to prevent further boundary disputes between the Vaishnavites and the Saivites. The agreement about temple honours mentioned in the last chapter was between this Uttamanambi and Vedacarya Bhatta, probably a descendant of Vedavyasa Bhatta.

* According to the Madhva tradition, it was Vyasaraya who, holding his breath, ran the boundary.

After the year 1421 A.D., Srirangacarya visited Vijayanagar and winning over Pratapa Deva Raya by his mastery over chess, got a jagir from him and the title of "Chakra Raya" for his brother. It is noteworthy that the *Koyil Olugu* refers to the Vijayanagar king as "Gaja vettai Pratapa Raya". This king is none else than Deva Raya II (1422–46) who is referred to as "Gaja vetakara" in the Telugu and as "गजमृगयाविराज" in the Sanskrit colophons of works ascribed to him. The Uttamanambi returned to Srirangam a very prosperous and influential man and utilized his acquisitions for the service of the temple. The "Lakshmi Kavya" (which will be noticed later in these pages) describes him as "मृष्टान्नदाता", "moving like a veritable moon surrounded by stars in the shape of erudite Brahmins."

Srirangacarya's brother Chakra Raya Uttamanambi was a renowned scholar and polyhistor. He impressed king Deva Raya so much with his scholarship that the latter, after consulting his ministers, conferred on him the title of "Bhu Chakra Raya" and gave him a separate adhinam at Srirangam. The Uttamanambi however, true to his family tradition spent most of the money on

kainkaryas to the temple. He renovated the shrine of Nammalvar which was damaged during the Mahomedan invasion, repaired many temple walls which had met with a similar fate and reinstalled the idol of Garuda in the Alagiya Manavalan Mantapam as the old bronze Garuda installed by a Chola king was broken badly by the invaders. This incident is inscribed in the Dharma Varma Vithi in the following sloka :

मन्मथवर्षे ज्येष्ठे रविवारे च रेवतीतारे ।
श्रीचक्रायविभुना श्रीमान्गरुडः प्रतिष्ठितो भूत्यै ॥

He rebuilt the Rama temple originally built in the Chola's time and had the idol of Andal also installed there. Varaha Nayanar, formerly installed by Kura Narayana Jiyar, was also reinstalled with due ceremony. Finally, he had Hanuman installed on a pillar near the Dhvajarohana Mantapa and reconstructed the Arya Bhatta Gate which was damaged by fire during the sack of Srirangam.

Srirangacarya's son was Krishnamacarya, otherwise known as Rajakkal Perumal Uttamanambi. He is stated to have donated his entire property to the temple and even dismantled his stately mansion and built

hundred-pillared mantapams with the materials obtained thereby. This Uttamanambi was also known by the titles of "Perumal Samanta" and "Arangar Samanta".

Tirumalainatha Uttamanambi was the next prominent descendant of the family. He was the author of the work 'Lakshmi Kavya" which furnishes a good deal of information about the Uttamanambi family and contemporary life at Srirangam. Like his predecessors, he was maintaining close contact with the kings of Vijayanagar and managed to obtain from them complete remission of kist for 282 villages belonging to the temple, which were thereafter treated as "sarva manya." In keeping with the traditions of his family, he also made his contributions to the renovation and improvement of the temple. He will perhaps be better remembered by posterity as the author of the "Lakshmi Kavya," a Sanskrit work of eighteen sargas containing over a thousand slokas. The kavya describes the story of the consort of Sri Ranganatha known as the "Uraiyur Nachiyar" from her birth as the daughter of Karikal Chola till her union with the Lord in divine wedlock. The first three sargas contain a detailed description of

the temple, the gods enshrined therein, an account of Alvars and Acaryas and the various kainkaryas and utsavas conducted. In the colophons he signs his name as Uttamaraya Tirumaladhisa and Uttamanambi Tirumaladhisa as will be seen from the slokas reproduced below :—

" देवो यस्य भुजङ्गभोगशयनः श्रीरङ्गराजो हरि-
स्तातः काश्यपचक्रराय विबुधो लक्ष्मीर्जनन्युत्तमा ।
तस्मैवोत्तमरायसत्तिरुमलाधीशप्रबन्धुः कृतौ
लक्ष्मीकाव्य उदारवैभवानधौ सर्गोऽयमादिर्गतः ॥ "

" तस्मैवोत्तमनम्बिसत्तिरुमलाधीशप्रबन्धुः कृतौ
लक्ष्मीकाव्य उदारवैभवनिधौ सर्गो गतोऽष्टादशः ॥ "

The names of the Sri Vaishnava teachers who lived in Srirangam are given in the introductory portion of the work. The author's parents were Chakraraya and Lakshmi. He mentions that he was also patronized by Gajavettai Praudhadeva Raya (Deva Raya II) of Vijayanagar. He appears to have written a number of other kavyas also such as Anandalahari, Saundaryalahari, Lavanyalahari and Madhuryalahari but only the former two are now extant. Under the direction of Manavala Mahamuni, his disciple Prativadi Bhayamkaram Annan

wrote commentaries on the Anandalahari and Saundaryalahari. The *Koyil Olugu* records that in 1458 A.D. Tirumalainatha came into conflict with Kampaya Raja a representative of Vijayanagar, and had to live outside Srirangam for 12 years. The dispute was settled only when Tirumala Raja became the ruler of the area in 1470 A. D.

Chinna Krishnaraya Uttamanambi was the next person of renown in this family. In 1487, he obtained from Eramanchi Timmappa Nayak and other chiefs 20 villages for the temple and utilized the income for extensive improvements. In 1534, there was a famine and the Nayak king ruling at Madura forced the Uttamanambi to hand over all the grain stored at Srirangam for temple use. As all his efforts to dissuade the Nayak from robbing the temple property were in vain, this Uttamanambi disembowelled himself and sacrificed his life before the ruler. He is therefore known as "Kudal sara vala Nayanar".

Srinivasacarya was the eighty-sixth successor in the family. During his time, small kingdoms came into existence as Madura, Trichinopoly, Tanjore etc., and the petty chiefs appropriated the temple lands

lying within their domains with the result that only 96 villages in the area under Chokkanatha Nayak were left for the temple. In 1673, the Nayak, who was a devotee of Lord Ranganatha, handed over these 96 villages to Srinivasacarya Uttamanambi and executed a bronze sasanam in Telugu empowering the Acarya to manage the lands as sarvamanya and conduct all the festivals in the temple as in the past.

During the time of his successor Sriranga-cārya, Tiruchirappalli was conquered by the Marathas and was being ruled by Morari Rao. He took away a further 16 villages from the temple lands and divided the rest between the Srirangam temple, Jambukesvaram (Tiruvanaikkaval) and the Tayumanasvami shrine but appointed Sriranga-cārya as the sole trustee. A few years later, Anwaruddin, Nawab of Carnatic, captured Tiruchirapalli which later fell into the hands of Nawab Shirajuddin Devulla Mahomed Ali Khan. This Nawab converted the temple lands into a srotriyam in favour of the Uttamanambi family for purposes of maintaining the worship in the three temples referred to above. In later days, the status and influence of this ancient family of

temple wardens declined considerably. Some of the descendants were childless and the direct line of succession was broken. A fire which broke out in their ancestral house destroyed many of the old documents and with them the family's title to many estates. The exclusive rights and privileges which are still being enjoyed in the temple by the surviving members of the family form the only vestiges of the glory of their ancestors and the enviable services rendered by them, generation after generation, to the temple of Śri Ranganatha.

CHAPTER X.

LATER HISTORY OF THE SRIRANGAM TEMPLE

We now get an account of the benefactions of Kandadai Ramanuja Dasa* to the Sriranġam Temple. This ascetic who first came to Sriranġam in 1491 A. D. was none else than Rama Raja, the elder brother of Vira Narasinġa Raya, otherwise known as Narasinġa Saluva, who, while ruling as the semi-independent governor of Chandragiri in 1486, deposed the weak nominal sovereign Praudha Deva Raya (not Deva Raya II) ruling at Vijayanagar and took over the reigns of administration himself. This event is known to historians as the 'first usurpation'. Rama Raja, who was well-versed in all the Sastras, renounced the world and went to Ayodhya where he obtained a number of Sri Rama's gold coins known as

* This Ramanuja Dasa is known in Tirupati inscriptions and records as 'Kandadai Ramanuja Ayyaṅgar'. The *Tirumalai Oluġu* describes him as a 'Sattada Srivaishnava' and enumerates in detail his benefactions to the Tirumalai Temple. The fact that Ramanuja Dasa and Ramanuja Ayyaṅgar were one and the same person can easily be realized as both the *Koyil Oluġu* and the *Tirumalai Oluġu* call him an adept in the art known as 'Sparsa vedi' and also record the services rendered by him to the temples at Sriranġam and Tirumalai.

Rama madai'. Returning to Chandragiri, 'he gave one of these coins to his brother Vira Narasinga and obtained from him in return a royal charter that he should be honoured in all the 108 Vaishnavite holy towns. He proceeded to Tirupati and offering a coin of Rama, brought all the temples in Tirumalai under his control. As mentioned before, he came to Srirangam in 1491 and became a devout disciple of Kandadai Annan Donning the robes of an ekangi, he obtained the dasya nama of 'Kandadai Ramanuja Dasa'. He became the chief of the ekangis and introduced his Anjaneya Mudra as the most superior in the temple. He settled down at Srirangam permanently and supervised the work of the ekangis to ensure that they strictly followed the code of Ramanuja. When once the Kaveri, which was in spate, caused much damage to the temple, Ramanuja Dasa arranged for the ravages caused by the floods to be repaired promptly.

One Koneri Raja, who succeeded Tirumala Raja as the agent of Vijayanagar, joined hands with the Saivites of Tiruvanaikkaval and caused much harassment to the Vaishnavites of Srirangam. Ramanuja Dasa sought the help of Narasa Nayaka (who was

the general of Immadi Narasinga, son of Narasinga Saluva, and had killed his king and usurped the throne in 1505) and the latter promptly marched on Koneri Raja with an army and killed him.

Narasa Nayaka and his son Nagama Nayaka then worshipped at Sri Ranganatha's shrine and taking advantage of this, Ramanuja Dasa obtained many a concession from the erstwhile ruler of Vijayanagar. The Nayak literally showered pearls and diamonds on the idol and made many permanent provisions for the conduct of the temple festivities. Later, Ramanuja Dasa constructed anew the gopuras on the wall built by Vira Sundara Brahma Raya. He renovated the thousand pillared mantapa, rebuilt the eastern gopura on the Akalankan wall and gave a gold coating to the sacred Vimana and the vahanas in the temple. He reconstructed the shrine of Vitthalesvara and in short, repaired all the damages caused to the temple during the Mahomedan invasion and brought it to its original state of resplendency. The Lord, pleased with his manifold services, conferred on him the title of 'Kulasekhara Perumal'.

The later history of the Srirangam temple is not a happy one to recount. The

Mahomedan invasion, the violent political changes wrought by it and frequent interferences by the kings of Vijayanagar in the affairs of the temple resulted in so many modifications in the temple routine that the *Koyil Olugu* ruefully records that the "Code introduced by Udaiyavar (Ramanuja) had collapsed". Before the invasion, the Cera, Chola and Pandya kings refrained from interfering with the management of the temple lands except with the object of investigating into misdeeds and punishing the wrongdoers. When the Tamil country passed under the control of the Vijayanagar kings, they started appointing their own men as temple superintendents and included the management of the temple as part of their royal administration. The Kandadai family, commencing from Mudali Andan, enjoyed the temple honours undisputedly for an unbroken period of 190 years from the time of Ramanuja. After the invasion, the honours were being equally divided between the Kandadai family, the successors of Sriranga Narayana Jiyar and Vadhula Desikar. Even this arrangement did not continue for long. The creation of Cakraraya by the Vijayanagar king and the advent of

Kandadai Ramanuja Dasa caused further splits in the order of temple servants with the result that the code of management established by Ramanuja in accordance with sastraic injunctions enunciated by the Lord Himself in the Pancaratra, broke down completely.

In 1498, Madura and Trichinopoly passed under the control of Visvanatha Nayak. With his assistance, Narasimhacarya, son of Vadhula Desika, secured for the temple many jewels and gold and silver vessels. Thirty years later, Krishnappa Nayak made many additions to his predecessor's benefactions. In 1579, when Muttu Virappa Nayak was ruling at Madura, a conflict arose at Srirangam between Uttamanambi and Bhattar Tirumalacarya over their respective rights in the temple. The Nayak supported Uttamanambi and cancelled Bhattar's privileges in the temple. When later the Raja of Vijayanagar marched on Trichinopoly, Bhattar joined hands with him. Taking advantage of this, Uttamanambi poisoned the mind of the Nayak against Bhattar and had the latter arrested and imprisoned in a fort. Bhattar's house was looted and his family had to take shelter in Turaiyur. His release was,

however, obtained by a Reddi of the place who paid a ransom of 20,000 gold mohurs for the purpose. The Nayak's son Tirumala Sauri restored Bhattar to his former position and Uttamanambi, now rendered powerless, compromised with his old enemy. These incidents, however, resulted in the Nayak developing a strong prejudice against the Srirangam shrine and its acaryapurushas.

(The printed versions of *Koyil Olugu* end here and this account is continued from a manuscript version.)

He threatened Uttamanambi that unless he paid 50,000 gold mohurs to Bhattar, he would be handed over to his former enemy. Uttamanambi refused at first but when his house was surrounded by Bhattar's men and his son Periya Tiruvadi committed suicide, he made peace with the Nayak by agreeing to pay the ransom demanded. To do this, he sold away all his property and lands belonging to the temple thereby ruining the finances of the temple. Both Bhattar and Uttamanambi passed away soon after but only after causing incalculable harm to the temple by their mutual hatred and uncompromising hostility.

During the reign of Cokkanatha Nayak after the year 1588, Srinivasa Desika, grandson of Pranatartihara Desika in the line of Andan, became famous for his learning and was invited to Srirangam by the local Vaishnavites to defeat in argument an Advaitin called Vajrangi. A debate lasting for 44 days took place between the two with the four brothers of the Nayak as observers. Although the Nayaks were partial to the Advaitin, Desika was victorious in the end and managed to convert all of them as his disciples. Proving his descent from Mudali Andan, he got back all the honours due to the Kandadai family and with the help of the king, rendered many kainkaryas to the shrine. He reorganized the distribution of Tirtha honours in the temple thereby removing many inequities that existed at the time. The brothers of Cokkanatha Nayak also endowed the temple with many benefactions which included the construction of the mantapas surrounding the altar, the steps leading to the sanctum and the Nacciyar shrine. After 1678 A. D. Muttu Alakadri Nayak, the brother of Cokka Natha, ascended the throne and contributed to the shrine a gold suryaprabha, a golden umbrella, a

diamond angi (shirt) and other innumerable jewels and vessels. His acarya was Kumara Srinivasa Desika, son of Srinivasa Desika mentioned above.

Misled by one Tiruvenkatanatha Ayyan, an officer of the state, the Nayak came down to Srirangam, surrounded the house of his Acarya, captured his sons and prepared to torture them. The aged Desika, unable to bear this unprovoked attack, showered filth on the Nayak and cursed him with a painful death within six months. Somewhat taken aback by this, the Nayak released his sons but seized all the Acarya's property. As a protest against this atrocity, Desika undertook a fast unto death and passed away after 40 days. Two of his sons fled to the Chola country while a third was killed by the Nayak. Even Mangammal, the mother of the Nayak, got disgusted with her son's actions and left the country on the pretext of undertaking a pilgrimage. The Nayak ultimately, developed ulcers all over his body and died a miserable death. His mother returned to the country and began to rule it herself as Rani Mangammal. She recalled the Acarya's sons and restored them to their former position. After the demise

of Kumara Srinivasacarya, his son Sundararaja Vadhula Desika was in charge of the Sri Karyam. His uncle Sriranganaraja Vadhula Desika usurped the position of his nephew and drove him away from Srirangam. As the acarya of Rani Mangammal, he became famous as Dorai Rangacarya. With the help of the Rani, he consecrated to the Lord a pearl necklace, a diamond medal and a diamond crown. The Rani also performed the tulabhara and offered a huge treasure to the God.

After 1707, during the reign of Vijayaranga Cokkanatha, Srinivasa Desika, son of Srirangacarya donated, with the help of the Nayak, a number of jewels and other temple paraphernalia and also had a mirror room constructed.

In 1720, Vedavyasa Bhattar Raghunathavaryar, in the name of a religious gathering, collected together a large crowd and defied royal authority by plundering the shops and closing the gates of the temple. Irulappa Nayak, after a futile siege of two months, captured Raghunathavarya by deceit and produced him and the other rebels before Vijayaranga who ordered them to be blinded.

Raghunathavarya was however spared from the ordeal on the intervention of Kumara Srinivasacarya but was imprisoned for twelve years.

After 1728, the Carnatic kingdom collapsed and the Srirangam temple had to face many a difficulty. Considering the fact that Srirangam was successively invaded again not only by Mahomedans but also by the French, the following lines of Vedanta Desika from his immortal Abhitistava appear to be prophetic.

कलिप्रणिधिलक्षणैः कलितशाक्यलोकायतैः
तुरुष्कयवनादिभिर्जगति जृम्भमाणं भयम् ।

Kalipranidhilakshanaih kalitasakyalokayataih
Turushkayavanadibhir jagati jrimbhamanam bhayam

[The increasing menace to the Divya-mangala-vigrahas in temples from representatives of Kali Purusha, the Sakyas and the atheists, the Mahomedans and the Yavanas (aliens)].

Canda Sahib came with an army and captured the Trichinopoly Fort. In the year Raktakshi he besieged Srirangam and demanded tributes from the residents. An agent of the Raya intervened and persuaded Parasara Bhatta, Vadhula Desika and Uttamanambi to pay a

lakh of rupees to the Nawab by disposing of some temple jewels. Later the Nizam invaded the country with a large army but the Vaishnavites befriended his officers and saved the temple from attack. Five or six years later, the French became powerful at Pondicherry, invaded Srirangam and began to harass its inhabitants. They are reported to have stayed for two years but did not cause any damage to the temple although they looted much property.

In the year Plavanga after 1781 A.D., Haidar Ali invaded the Cholamandala with a lakh of soldiers and surrounded Srirangam. He however, spared the temple on the intervention of his chief accountant, who was a Srivaishnava. In 1790, his son Tippu Sultan repeated the attack but the local leaders such as Jiyar, Bhattar and Vadhula Desikar pacified him by reading out laudatory addresses and giving him costly presents. During the Mahomedan regime that followed, a corrupt Annangar of Srirangam, ably assisted by the ruling Nawab, harassed the local acaryas considerably with a view to appropriate their property. He kept them in confinement for over thirty months and plundered the temple. The acaryas were

released and reinstated when Nizamulk came to power but as half their adhinams had been assigned to Annangar by the previous Nawab, Vadhula Desikar and Parasara Bhattar stopped from going to the temple. At this, the Nawab conducted a thorough investigation into the matter and finding the Annangar guilty of plundering temple property, had him exiled from Srirangam.

The same year (1800), the Mahomedan rule came to an end and the country passed under the control of the East India Company. One Joseph Wallace was in charge of the administration at Trichinopoly and it is to this Britisher that we owe the preservation of the manuscripts of the *Koyil Olugu* and other *Olugus*. With the help of his writer Gajendra Raya and Dubhash Seshachala Ayyar, he set right many iniquities that were perpetrated during the Muslim rule and reinstated the acaryas in their original places. He assessed the financial position of the temple and introduced a budget that would keep the expenditure well within the revenue. His regime, however, marked the beginning of the mutual quarrels between the Vadakalais and the Tengalais of Srirangam. In the year Raktakshi, there arose a dispute between the

two communities regarding their respective rights in the temple and Wallace called both the sides to his court. The Vadakalais represented that (1) they were numerically superior to the Tengalais (2) the latter had only lately installed the idol of Manavala Mahamuni on the gopura and (3) they had commenced reciting the verse "Sri Sailesa Daya Patram" only recently. They also accused the Tengalais of having altered the Vadagalai namam at the entrance of the Vedanta Desika shrine into a Tengalai namam. The Tengalais, on the other hand, maintained that the temple belonged to them for generations and all the acaryapurushas like Vedavyasa Bhattar, Vadhula Desika, Kandadai Annangar, Embar Ayyangar and Uttamanambi belonged to their creed. They admitted having altered the 'tiruman' in the shrine of Sri Vedanta Desika to maintain uniformity with the other caste marks on the temple. The *Koyil Olugu* records that ultimately Wallace decreed that the entire temple should be manned by Tengalais.

In his investigations, Wallace was assisted by one Velappa Mudali of the Devasthanam who brought to his notice the existence of *Olugus* in many families in the

town and their great value as historical documents. Wallace, with the characteristic enthusiasm of an European for old manuscripts deputed Velappa Mudali to have them rewritten currently, including contemporary events which took place during their time. All the available *Olugus* in Srirangam were accordingly brought up-to-date, copied and deposited in the temple (terku kallarai) with the seals of the five leading sthalattars (privileged families).

The End-

APPENDIX A

The Music of the Divya Prabandha

(T. S. PARTHASARATHY)

In this ancient and hoary land, music was never being considered as an art or as a form of entertainment. It occupied an honoured place among the upavedas and was known as the Gandharva Veda. God was conceived as Nada Brahman, having sound as His body (nada tanuh) and the way to attain salvation through music was called Nadopasana. Hundreds of references can be gathered from our Srutis, Smritis, Itihasas and Puranas reiterating these maxims. The truth that "one who knows the mysteries of Nada Vidya attains Moksha much more easily than through other paths" is stressed by many seers from Yajnavalkya of yore to our own Tyagaraja who lived barely a century ago. Tyagaraja has composed more than twenty kritis on the theme that Nadopasana leads one to swarga end apavarga.

In accordance with this tradition, our saints and bhaktas, devotees and seers, Alwars and Nayanmars have always composed their devotional outpourings in a musical garb. This branch of music is known as the "Vaidika Gana" or Sacred Music in contrast to "Loukika Gana" or Secular Music. As the *Samaveda* itself was a form of sacred music, the theory that our music originated from it is often stressed by musicologists. In the fourth sarga of the Balakanda, Valmiki himself says that he composed his Ramayana in seven suddha jatis and three kala pramanas in the Margi style of Devagana. It is therefore clear that

sacred music is infinitely older than secular music apart from exceeding the latter by far in quantity also.

In the Tamil country, the Pasurams of Alwars, the Padikams of Nayanmars and the Tiruppugazh of Arunagirinatha are representative specimens of sacred music. Although these are not musical forms of the pattern of kritis and the like, they occupy an important place in that branch of music called the "kalpita sangeeta" composed as they are in a variety of ragas, talas and panns. And there is sufficient evidence to show that they were originally composed with music by their respective authors, although their original tunes might have disappeared long ago. The Guru Parampara Prabhavam states that when Periyalvar, the author of the Tirumozhi which is after his name, was taken in procession at Madura by king Vallabha Deva he sang the Tiruppallandu using the bells on the elephant's neck as cymbals. The saint Tiruppanalvar was a professional musician and was always singing the praises of Lord Ranganatha with a Vina in his hands. When Tirujnanasambandha, the boy prodigy-saint, was singing the praises of the Lord at Sirkali keeping time with his hands, the God presented him with a pair of golden cymbals. Saint Tiru Nilakantha used to accompany Jnanasambandha on his Yazh and on one occasion was about to break it into pieces as he was unable to follow a pann in a difficult raga which Sambandha was composing. All these show that many of the Alvars and Nayanmars were not only great devotees but competent musicians as well.

The four thousand verses known as the "Divya Prabandha" occupy a foremost place among such compositions. They are found to have been allotted 50 ragas and 5 talas of the Carnatic music and 19 panns and 4 talas of the Tamil music. How these verses, composed by 12 saints from different parts of South India at different times came to be collected together and arranged in their present order is a fascinating story which is briefly narrated below.

Towards the end of the 9th century A. D. the famous Nathamuni was living at Kattumannar Koyil near Chidambaram. One day several Vaishnavites from Melnad who visited the shrine at the place recited a decad of Tamil verses commencing with the word "Aravamude" and ending with the words "these ten out of a thousand composed by Sathakopa of Kuruhoor". Nathamuni, who was thrilled by the verses, made anxious enquiries from them if they knew the rest of the verses but they replied that the ten were all that they knew. Nathamuni was sorely disappointed and soon got into a state in which he could not rest till he unearthed the other Pasurams of Nammalvar. He proceeded forthwith to Kuruhoor, the birth place of the Alvar and met Parankusa Dasa, a prasishya of Madhurakavi Alvar. The latter confessed to Nathamuni that due to the indifference of the local Vaishnavites, the verses were practically lost to the world and the only method of getting them again was, according to his Guru, to meditate on Nammalvar by repeating the "Kanni Nun Siruttambu" twelve thousand times. Nathamuni was only too glad to follow the advice and in due course Saint Nammalvar appeared before his mental

vision and on his prayer taught him the Tiruvoymozhi. Nathamuni returned to Mannarkoyil aud with a view to perpetuate the Prabandham by setting it to music, took the assistance of his two nephews Melai Ahattalvan and Kizhai Ahattalvan and set the verses to the "Divya Gana" style of music on the model of the Udatta, Anudatta and Svarita prayogas of the Vedas. For this magnificent service rendered by Nathamuni not only to Vaishnavism but also to sacred music, Vedanta Desika aptly describes him as "*talam vazhangit-tamizh marai innisai tanda vallal*".

This anecdote from the Guru Parampara Prabhava and other works shows that Nathamuni was an adept in the art of music. It also shows that there were two styles of music at his time known as the "Divya Gana" and "Manushya Gana" and Nathamuni set the Tiruvoymozhi to music in the former. There is another anecdote also in the life of Nathamuni to show the relative merits of the two systems. In the court of the Chola king, who was ruling at Gangaikonda Cholapuram at the time, there was a dispute between two lady singers, one singing the Deva Gana style and the other the Manushya Gana style. The king set up a committee of musicians to settle the dispute and as recommended by them, declared that the Manushya Gana style was the superior of the two and honoured the exponent of that system. This broke the heart of the Deva Gana exponent who from that date decided to dedicate her art to none other but God and travelled from place to place singing in shrines. No one appreciated her music till she came to Mannarkoyil where Nathamuni realised her worth and praised her style of music.

The Chola king who heard about this incident sent for Nathamuni and requested him to explain the greatness of the "Divya Gana" style which the latter did with suitable authority. And to prove that one should possess a sharp ear for subtle srutis to appreciate that style. Nathamuni had several pairs of cymbals of different weights sounded at the same time and accurately told their individual weight. This shows that the Deva Gana style contained more subtle srutis than the Manushya Gana.

Which was the Deva Gana style and which the Manushya Gana? It is merely a probability that the former refers to Karnataka Sangita and the latter to the ancient music of the Tamils but it will require deep study and research to prove this. Among the 4000 verses of the Prabandha, Tamil panns and talas have been assigned only to 1102 verses of Nammalvar called the "Tiruvoymozhi" while the rest are sung in ragas and talas of the Carnatic music. For the verses of the Tiruvoymozhi, Carnatic ragas and talas have also been furnished, which were probably added by a later musician. How far the ragas and talas now found in editions of the Prabandha approximate to the original tunes assigned by Nathamuni is a matter, which perhaps it is now too late to discover.

Among the 50 Carnatic ragas assigned to the Pasurams, one finds common ones like Todi, Bhairavi, Kalyani and rare ragas like Dvijavanti, Saindhavi, Yamuna and Sokavarali. For a number of unknown ragas, the editors have overcome the difficulty by calling them Aparupam (Apurva). Nineteen Tamil

panns and 4 talas are found allotted to the verses of the Tiruvoymozhi.

As far as possible, ragas suitable to the spirit of the Pasurams have been assigned. For instance the Tiruppallandu of Periyalvar is sung in Nata, the Tiruppalli Ezhuchi of Tondaradippodi in Bhupalam and the Talattu of Kulasekhara in Nilambari. The fact whether the Tamil panns have also been similarly assigned can be ascertained only if their lakshanas are known. But there appears to be no co-ordination between the two raga systems. For instance, different verses in the pann Sikamaram have been set in Bhairavi, Mukhari and Nadanamakriya.

The "Koyil Olugu" which is a record of the Srirangam temple for over two thousand years, also contains interesting information on how the Tiruvoymozhi was set to music by Nathamuni and how the Pasurams came to be sung after his time. It states that during Nathamuni's time the title "Nada Vinoda Arayar" was conferred by Lord Ranganatha on an Arayar, a Vaishnavite temple musician. God Himself is referred to here as "Gayaka Sarvabhauma", a surprisingly modern expression. The Guru Parampara, Koyil Olugu and similar Vaishnavite works contain a mine of information which will assist research regarding the "Music of The Divya Prabandha."

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